



HB 4065- House Committee on Law & Justice

Position: Support

February 21, 2017

RE: Department of Corrections Employment of Returning Citizens

The ACLU of Michigan believes removing barriers to employment plays a critical role in decreasing recidivism rates, which is why we support HB 4065.

Thousands of companies and organizations across the state continue to enforce hiring policies that automatically exclude people with criminal records, especially felony records. Policies that automatically exclude people with criminal records from obtaining employment are discriminatory. Additionally, due to the racial inequalities of the criminal justice system, these policies have a disproportionate effect of excluding African Americans: approximately twenty-five percent of African American adults have felony records compared to only 6 percent of non-African Americans. Ultimately, "felony exclusion" policies contribute to the higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, and crime.

When an individual is released from prison, it is under the notion that they have completed their required time and can become productive members of society again. Yet policies strip returning citizens of the resources to do so.

The ACLU of Michigan recommends all businesses adopt "fair chance" hiring policies and remove automatic restrictions on hiring individuals with criminal records. We applaud Michigan Department of Corrections for standing as an example to this much needed reform.

Respectfully submitted,

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